

**ABSTRACT**

A flexible synchronization message format permits older mobiles as well as newer mobiles to access a wireless communication network. Three types of synchronization messages are time division multiplexed unto the synchronization channel. A first message is interpreted by the newer mobiles and some older mobiles. A second message is interpreted by a second set of older mobiles and a third message is interpreted by a final set of older mobiles. The second and third type of messages are formatted so that they will be ignored by the newer mobiles so that the newer mobiles will not follow instructions associated with older standards and, thereby, not take advantage of options offered under the newer standards. In another embodiment, the frequency with which each of the three messages is transmitted is varied to provide preferential treatment to a particular message type.

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